

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 AF-10 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OIC-02
/115 W

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R 230351Z DEC 77
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8867
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USUN 5793

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UNGA, RP, SN, TH, MY, ID
SUBJ: ASEAN'S PERFORMANCE DURING 32ND UNGA

REF: USUN 5227

SUMMARY: THROUGHOUT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN PLENARY
AS WELL AS ALL COMMITTEES, THE SALIENT CHARACTERISTIC
OF ASEAN'S PERFORMANCE WAS AN AVOIDANCE OF CONTROVERSY.
EXCEPT FOR THE PHILIPPINE PROPOSAL TO HOST THE 33RD
GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN MANILA, THERE WERE NO INITIATIVES
LAUNCHED NOR ANY SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF LEADERSHIP
DEMONSTRATED.

1. AS FAR AS ASEAN IS CONCERNED, THE FIVE NATIONS
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ROUTINELY CONSULTED AMONG THEMSELVES AND TRIED TO VOTE
AS A BLOC. THEIR SUCCESS IN DOING SO, HOWEVER, WAS DUE
MORE TO A FORTUITOUS LACK OF CONTENTIOUS ISSUES WHICH
MIGHT HAVE PULLED THEM IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS THAN ANY
STRONG SENSE OF UNITY. THE ASEAN AS A GROUP CO-SPONSORED
A NUMBER OF THIRD WORLD RESOLUTIONS, NONE OF WHICH WERE
PARTICULARLY RADICAL. THE FIVE COUNTRIES USUALLY VOTED

WITH THE GROUP OF 77 AND THUS, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, AGAINST US. THIS VOTING PATTERN, HOWEVER, WAS MORE AN INDICATION OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE GROUP OF 77 THAN IT WAS A REFLECTION OF ASEAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE US. ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US, SUCH AS GUAM, PUERTO RICO, ETC., THE ASEAN DELEGATES, AT OUR URGING, MODERATED THEIR POSITION. ON A MORE INFORMAL BASIS, EACH OF THE DELEGATIONS SEEMED SINCERELY TO WANT TO BE AS HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE TO US WITHIN THEIR INSTRUCTIONS. ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, THEY WERE INFORMATIVE TO THE EXTENT OF OCCASIONALLY LETTING US KNOW WHEN OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ASIAN GROUP WERE FORMULATING POSITIONS OR VOICING SENTIMENTS INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS. FOR INSTANCE ON THE ASIAN ITEM REGARDING REORGANIZATION OF RELEVANT UN ORGANS, WE WERE GIVEN INSIGHTS INTO CLOSED STRATEGY MEETINGS, AND WE WERE TOLD THAT VIETNAM, LAOS, AND MONGOLIA HAD SPOKEN AGAINST THE PROPOSAL. WHEN INITIATIVES TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR THE PHILIPPINE ITEM ON HOSTING THE 33RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY WERE IN PROGRESS, INDIVIDUAL ASEAN DELEGATIONS VOICED TO US THEIR OWN STRONG RESERVATIONS AND EVEN CHARACTERIZED THE PROPOSAL AS AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THEM. THEY SUGGESTED POSSIBLE TACTICS THAT MIGHT BE EMPLOYED TOWARD BURYING THE PROPOSAL. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT ALTHOUGH THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT DID NOT CONSULT WITH THE ASEAN'S IN ADVANCE OF INTRODUCTION OF THE ITEM, THE GROUP WAS WILLING TO CO-SPONSOR A PROPOSAL, ALBEIT SOMEWHAT CONFIDENTIAL

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BELATEDLY AND BEGRUDGINGLY, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE ASEAN UNITY (REFTEL).

2. ASEAN'S PERFORMANCE IN THE VARIOUS COMMITTEES FOLLOWED A SIMILAR PATTERN OF UNITY. ON THE QUESTION OF A UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE FIVE COUNTRIES (IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF THEIR VULNERABILITY ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE) CONSULTED AMONG THEMSELVES AND TOOK THE DECISION TO ABSTAIN, ALTHOUGH THE ITEM NEVER CAME TO A VOTE.

3. IN THE SIXTH COMMITTEE, ASEAN AS A WHOLE WAS NOT ACTIVE, ALTHOUGH THE PHILIPPINES TOOK AN ACTIVE ROLE ON CHARTER REVIEW AND ON ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING. THE PHILIPPINE ACTIVISM IN SIXTH COMMITTEE SEEMED TO BE A FUNCTION OF THE ADRIOTNESS OF THE PHILIPPINE DELEGATE ON THAT COMMITTEE (LOPEZ) AND WAS NOT DUPLICATED IN ANY OTHER COMMITTEE. THE PHILIPPINES WERE MODERATELY ACTIVE ON WOMEN'S AFFAIRS IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE, BUT THIS WAS PROBABLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE FACT THAT THE CURRENT PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO ROMANIA IS IN LINE TO BECOME CHAIRMAN OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE WHEN IT IS ASIA'S TURN

NEXT YEAR.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USUN 5793

4. IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS, ASEAN'S AS A GROUP NOT SURPRISINGLY SPOKE VIGOROUSLY IN FAVOR OF FUNDING FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE FOR ASIAN AND PACIFIC (ESCAP). ON OTHER MATTERS, THE INDONESIANS AND MALAYSIANS WERE UNIFORMLY QUIET, WHILE THE THAIS WERE SELDOM PRESENT. BOTH SINGAPORE AND THE PHILIPPINES WERE SERIOUS AND HARD-WORKING DELEGATIONS WITH VETERAN LEADERSHIP. BOTH WERE SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CONCERNS ABOUT BUDGETARY RESTRAINT AND WERE ANXIOUS TO BE HELPFUL WHENEVER THEY COULD WITHIN THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

5. IN FIRST COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE,

ITEMS WERE NO CONTENTIOUS ISSUES FOR ASEAN AND MOST

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ITEMS WERE DECIDED BY CONSENSUS. THE ASEAN'S RARELY
SPOKE AND SIMPLY VOTED TOGETHER WHEN THERE WAS A VOTE.

6. COMMENT: THERE ARE SEVERAL OBVIOUS FACTORS CONTRIBU-
TING TO ASEAN'S LOW-PROFILE APPROACH AND RELUCTANCE TO
CARVE OUT A DISCERNIBLE ASEAN TURF IN THE UN. ASEAN
SEEKS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY WITH THE THIRD
WORLD BUT WITHOUT ANTAGONIZING THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.
AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS THE CONSIDERATION OF NURTURING
THE BUDDING AND STILL FRAGILE SENSE OF ASEAN UNITY. THIS
GOAL, AFTER ALL, IS NOT LIKELY TO BE FURTHERED AND COULD
CONCEIVABLY BE DAMAGED BY AN ACTIVIST ASEAN STANCE IN
THE UN. GIVEN THE GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SPIRIT
OF COOPERATION TOWARD USUN, HOWEVER, IT MAY BE WORTHWHILE
TO CULTIVATE THE ASEAN DELEGATIONS EVEN MORE AND TO
DRAW SUPPORT FOR OUR CONCERNS BASED ON THE INCREASINGLY
MODERATE AND RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS THEY SEEM INCLINED
TO TAKE IN THE UN.
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